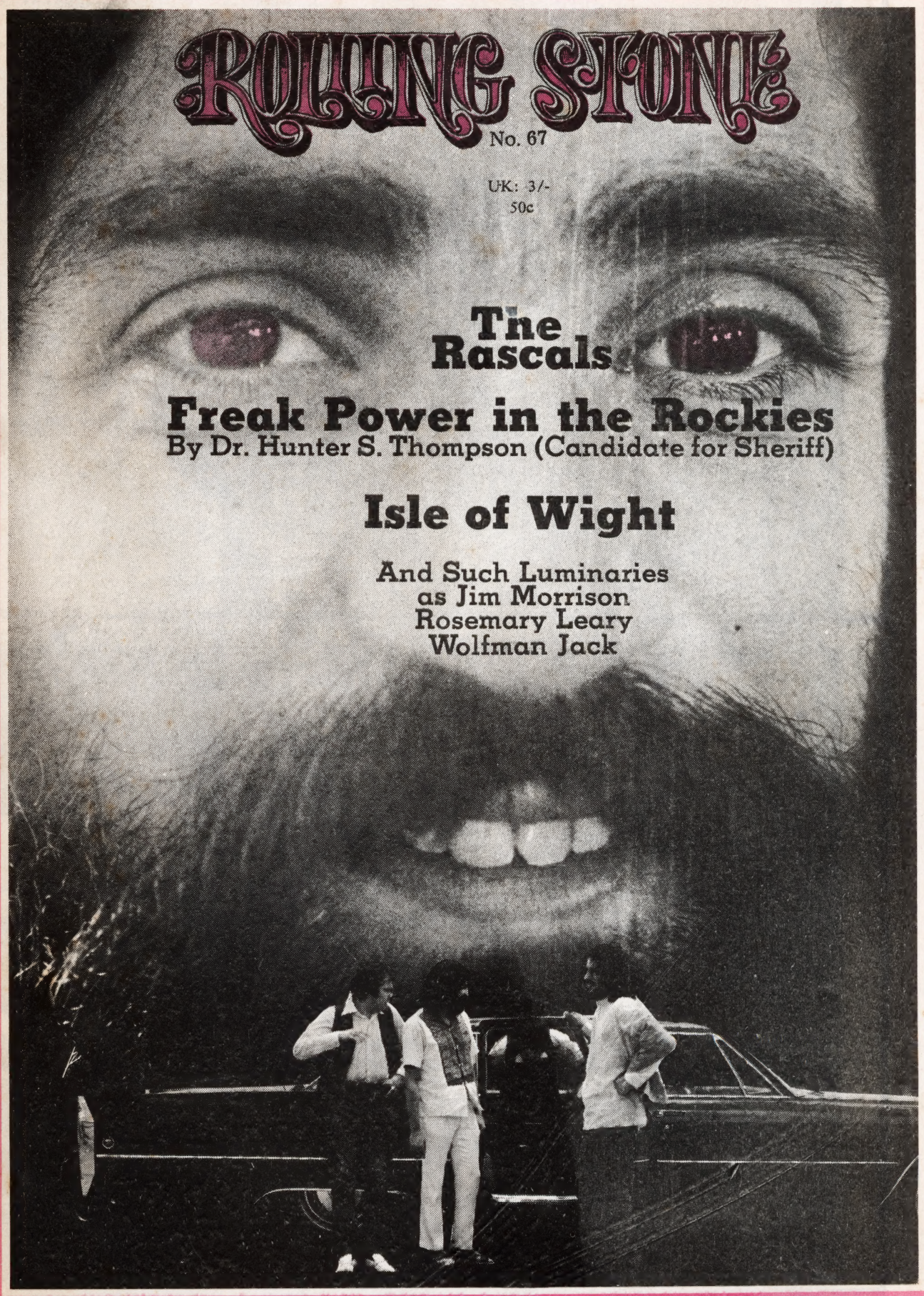

# ROLLING STONE

No. 67

UK: 3/-
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## The Rascals

## Freak Power in the Rockies
By Dr. Hunter S. Thompson (Candidate for Sheriff)

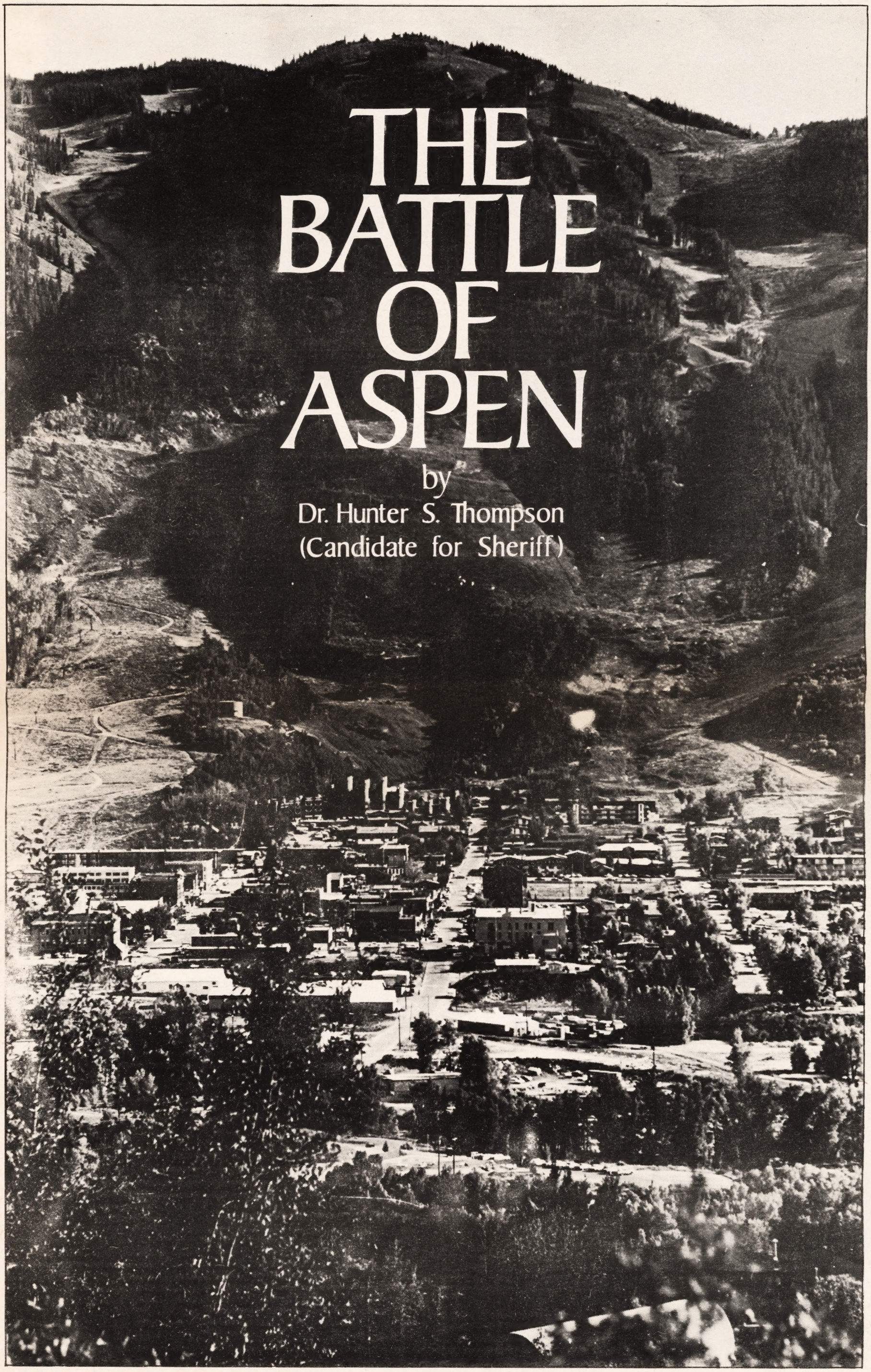
## Isle of Wight

And Such Luminaries
as Jim Morrison
Rosemary Leary
Wolfman Jack

Stephen Paley

# THE BATTLE OF ASPEN

by
Dr. Hunter S. Thompson
(Candidate for Sheriff)



*A memoir and rambling discussion (with rude slogans) of Freak Power in the Rockies . . . on the weird mechanics of running a takeover bid on a small town . . . and a vulgar argument for seizing political power and using it like a gun ripped away from a cop . . . with jangled comments on the uncertain role of the Head and the awful Stupor Factor . . . and other disorganized notes on "How to Punish the Fatbacks," how to make sure that Today's Pig is Tomorrow's Offal . . . and why this Crazed New World can only be dealt with by . . . A New Posse!*

*—or—*

*"Just how weird can you stand it, brother — before your love will crack?"*
*—Mike Lydon in Ramparts, March, 1970.*

Two hours before the polls closed we realized that we had no headquarters —no hole or Great Hall where the faithful could gather for the awful election-night deathwatch. Or to celebrate the Great Victory that suddenly seemed very possible.

We had run the whole campaign from a long oaken table in the Jerome Tavern on Main Street, working flat out in public so any one could see or even join if they felt ready . . . but now, in these final hours, we wanted a bit of privacy; some clean, well-lighted place, as it were, to hunker down and wait . . .

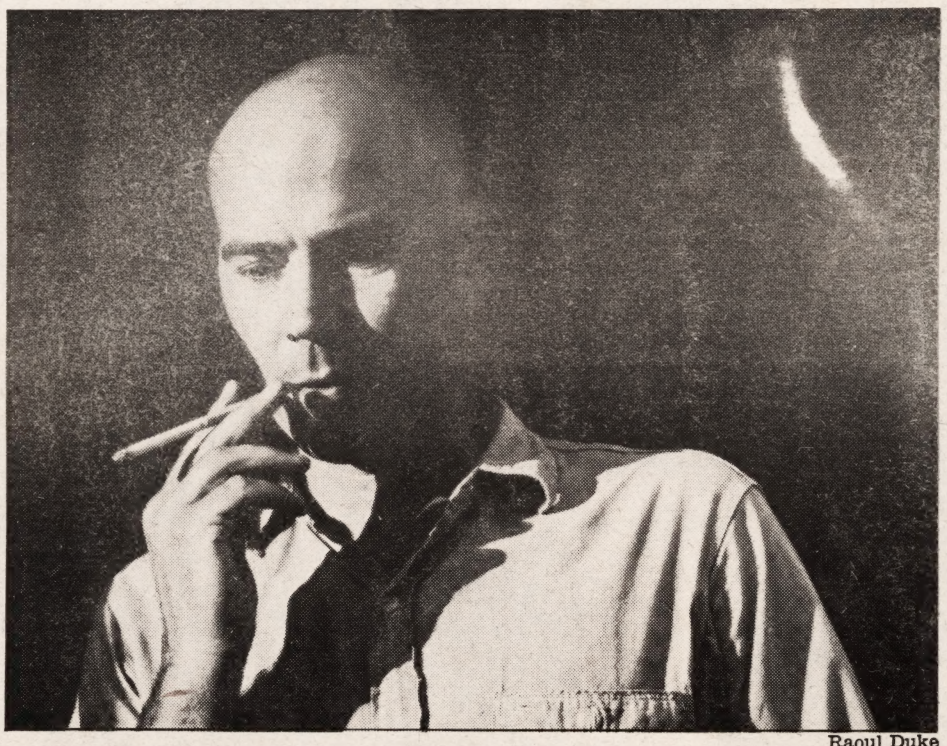
We also needed vast quantities of ice and rum — and a satchel of brain-rattling drugs for those who wanted to finish the campaign on the highest possible note, regardless of the outcome. But the main thing we needed, with dusk coming down and the polls due to close at 7 PM, was an office with several phone lines, for a blizzard of last-minute calls to those who hadn't yet voted. We'd collected the voting lists just before 5:00—from our poll-watcher teams who'd been checking them off since dawn—and it was obvious, from a very quick count, that the critical Freak Power vote had turned out in force.

Joe Edwards, a 29-year-old head, lawyer and bike-racer from Texas, looked like he might, in the waning hours of Election Day in November 1969, be the next mayor of Aspen, Colorado.

The retiring mayor, Dr. Robert "Buggsy" Barnard, had been broadcasting vicious radio warnings for the previous 48 hours, raving about long prison terms for vote-fraud and threatening violent harassment by "phalanxes of poll watchers" for any strange or freaky-looking scum who might dare to show up at the polls. We checked the laws and found that Barnard's radio warnings were a violation of the "voter intimidation" statutes, so I called the District Attorney and tried to have the mayor arrested at once . . . but the D.A. said "Leave me out of it; police your own elections."

Which we did, with finely-organized teams of poll-watchers: two inside each polling place at all times, with six more just outside in vans or trucks full of beef, coffee, propaganda, check lists and bound xerox copies of all Colorado voting laws.

The idea was to keep massive assistance available, at all times, to our point men *inside* the official voting places. And the reasoning behind this rather heavy public act—which jolted a lot of people who wouldn't have voted for Edwards anyway—was our concern that the mayor and his cops would create some kind of ugly scene, early on, and rattle the underground grapevine with fear-rumors that would scare off a lot of our voters. Most of our people were fearful of *any* kind of legal hassle at the polls, regardless of their rights. So it seemed important that we should make it very clear, from the start, that we knew the laws and we weren't going to tolerate *any* harassment of our people. None.



Raoul Duke

*Hunter S. Thompson has been a kind of ultimate freelancer for years. He wrote 'The Hells Angels' and got stomped for his trouble; he did a magnificent piece of documentary journalism on Jean-Claude Killy, the French ski champion - turned - Chevvy salesman for Playboy, that was eventually published by Scanlan's. His obituary for Lionel Olay—who was the ultimate freelancer—was a landmark in underground journalism, setting down, for all time, the personal objections of one generation to another's irrelevancies.*

*Last November, Thompson was campaign manager for Joe Edwards, a hip lawyer who decided to run for mayor of Aspen, Colorado, Thompson's—and a lot of other young people's—home in the Rockies.*

*Edwards lost by a very few votes, and the success of the campaign has inspired Thompson to run for sheriff, an office that is probably more crucial to his constituents than the mayor's post.*

*The ramifications of the Aspen race—along with other radical candidacies in the country—are widespread. Among other things, it offers an alternative to self-indulgent rhetoric, liberal compromise and bomb-throwing.*

*The Battle of Aspen is on; the election is in November.*

*—Editor*

Each poll-watcher on the dawn shift was given a portable tape-recorder with a microphone that he was instructed to stick in the face of any opposition poll-watcher who asked anything beyond the legally-allowable questions regarding Name, Age and Residence. Nothing else could be asked, under penalty of an obscure election law relating to "frivolous challenge," a little brother to the far more serious charge of "voter intimidation."

And since the only person who had actually threatened to intimidate voters was the mayor, we decided to force the confrontation as soon as possible in Ward 1, where Buggsy had announced that he would personally stand the first poll-watching shift for the opposition. If the buggers wanted a confrontation, we decided to give it to them.

The polling place in Ward 1 was a lodge called the Cresthaus, owned by an old and infamous Swiss/Nazi who calls himself Guido Meyer. Martin Bormann went to Brazil, but Guido came to Aspen — arriving here several years after the Great War . . . and ever since the he has spent most of his energy (including two complete terms as City Magistrate) getting even with this country by milking the tourists and having young (or poor) people arrested.

So Guido was watching eagerly when the Mayor arrived in his parking lot at ten minutes to 7, creeping his Porsche through a gauntlet of silent Edwards people. We had mustered a half-dozen of the scurviest looking *legal* voters we could find — and when the Mayor arrived at the polls these freaks were waiting to vote. Behind them, lounging around a coffee-dispenser in an old VW van, were at least a dozen others, most of them large and bearded, and several so eager for violence that they had spent the whole night making chain-whips and loading up on speed to stay crazy.

Buggsy looked horrified. It was the first time in his long drug experience that he had ever laid eyes on a group of non-passive, super-aggressive Heads. What had got into them? Why were their eyes so wild? And why were they yelling: "You're fucked, Buggsy . . . We're going to croak you . . . You're whole act is doomed . . . We're going to beat your ass like a gong."

Who were they? All strangers? Some gang of ugly bikers or speed-freaks from San Francisco? Yes . . . of course . . . that bastard Edwards had brought in a bunch of ringers. But then he looked again . . . and recognized, at the head of the group, his ex-drinkalong barbuddy Brad Reed, the potter and known gun freak, 6'4" and 220, grinning down through his beard and black hair-flag . . . saying nothing, just smiling . . .

Great God, he knew the others, too . . . there was Don Davidson, the accountant, smooth shaven and quite normal-looking in a sleek maroon ski parka, but not smiling at all . . . and who were those girls, those ripe blonde bodies whose names he knew from chance meetings in friendlier times? What were they doing out here at dawn, in the midst of this menacing mob?

What indeed? He scurried inside to meet Guido, but instead ran into Tom Benton, the hairy artist and known Radical . . . Benton was grinning like a crocodile and waving a small black microphone, saying: "Welcome, Buggsy. You're late. The voters are waiting outside . . . Yes, did you see them out there? Were they friendly? And if you wonder what *I'm* doing here, I'm Joe Edwards' poll watcher . . . and the reason I have this little black machine here is that I want to tape every word you say when you start committing felonies by harassing our voters . . ."

The Mayor lost his first confrontation almost instantly. One of the first obvious Edwards-voters of the day was a blond kid who looked about 17. Buggsy began to jabber at him and Benton moved in with the microphone, ready to intervene . . . but before Benton could utter a word the kid began snarling at the Mayor, yelling: "Go fuck yourself, Buggsy! *You* figure out how old I am. I know the goddam law! I don't have to show you proof of *anything*! You're a *dying man*, Buggsy! Get out of my way. I'm ready to vote!"

The Mayor's next bad encounter was with a very heavy young girl with no front teeth, wearing a baggy grey T-shirt and no bra. Somebody had brought her to the polls, but when she got there she was crying — actually shaking with fear — and she refused to go inside. We weren't allowed within 100 feet of the door, but we got word to Benton and he came out to escort the girl in. She voted, despite Buggsy's protests, and when she came outside again she was grinning like she'd just cinched Edwards' victory all by herself.

After that, we stopped worrying about the mayor. No goons had shown up with blackjacks, no cops were in evidence, and Benton had established full control of his turf around the ballot box. Elsewhere, in Wards 2 and 3, the freak-vote was not so heavy and things were going smoothly. In Ward 2, in fact, our official poll-watcher (a drug person with a beard about two feet long) had caused a panic by challenging dozens of *straight* voters. The city attorney called Edwards and complained that some ugly lunatic in Ward 2 was refusing to let a 75-year-old woman cast her ballot until she produced a birth certificate. We were forced to replace the man; his zeal was inspiring, but we feared he might spark a backlash.

This had been a problem all along. We had tried to mobilize a huge underground vote, without frightening the burghers into a counterattack. But it didn't work — primarily because most of our best people were also hairy, and very obvious. Our opening shot — the midnight registration campaign — had been ramrodded by bearded heads: Mike Solheim and Pierre Landry, who worked the streets and bars for head voters like wild junkies, in the face of near-total apathy.

* * *

Aspen is full of freaks, heads, funhogs and weird night-people of every description . . . but most of them would prefer jail or the bastinado to the horror of actually registering to vote. Unlike the main bulk of burghers and businessmen, the dropout has to *make an effort* to use his long-dormant vote. There is not much to it, no risk and no more than ten minutes of small talk and time — but to the average dropout the idea of registering to vote is a very heavy thing. The psychic implications, "copping back into the system," etc. are fierce . . . and we learned, in Aspen, that there is no point even trying to convince people to take that step unless you can give them a very good reason. Like a very unusual candidate . . . or a fireball pitch of some kind.

The central problem that we grappled with last fall is the gap that separates the Head Culture from activist politics. Somewhere in the nightmare of failure that gripped America between 1965 and 1970, the old Berkeley-born notion of beating The System by fighting it gave way to a sort of numb conviction that it made more sense in the long run to Flee, or even to simply hide, than to fight the bastards on anything even vaguely resembling their own terms.

Our ten-day registration campaign had focused almost entirely on the Head/Dropout culture; they wanted no part of activist politics and it had been a hellish effort to convince them to register at all. Many had lived in Aspen for five or six years, and they weren't at all concerned with being *convicted* of vote-fraud—they simply didn't want to be hassled. Most of us are living here because we like the idea of being able to walk out our front doors and smile

*—Continued on Next Page*

Bob Krueger

*Thompson and Joe Edwards pondering a sculpture for which latter had just traded away his motorcycle*

*—Continued from Preceding Page*

at what we see. On my own front porch I have a palm tree growing in a blue toilet bowl . . . and on occasion I like to wander outside, stark naked, and fire my .44 magnum at various gongs I've mounted on the nearby hillside. I like to load up on mescaline and turn my amplifier up to 110 decibels for a taste of "White Rabbit" while the sun comes up on the snow-peaks along the Continental Divide.

Which is not entirely the point. The world is full of places where a man can run wild on drugs and loud music and fire-power—but not for long. I lived a block above Haight Street for two years but by the end of '66 the whole neighborhood had become a cop-magnet and a bad sideshow. Between the narcs and the psychedelic hustlers, there was not much room to live.

What happened in the Haight echoed earlier scenes in North Beach and the Village . . . and it proved, once again, the basic futility of seizing turf you can't control. The pattern never varies: a low-rent area suddenly blooms new and loose and human—and then fashionable, which attracts the press and the cops at about the same time. Cop problems attract more publicity, which then attracts fad-salesmen and hustlers — which means money, and that attracts junkies and jack-rollers. Their bad action causes publicity and—for some perverse reason—an influx of bored, upward mobile types who dig the menace of "white ghetto" life and whose expense-account tastes drive local rents and street prices out of reach of the original settlers . . . who are forced, once again, to move on.

One of the most hopeful developments of the failed Haight/Ashbury scene was the exodus to rural communes. Most of the communes failed—for reasons that everybody can see now, in retrospect (like that scene in *Easy Rider* where all those poor freaks were trying to grow their crops in dry sand)—but the few that succeeded, like the Hog Farm in New Mexico, kept a whole generation of heads believing that the future lay somewhere outside the cities.

In Aspen, hundreds of Haight-Ashbury refugees tried to settle in the wake of that ill-fated "Summer of Love" in 1967. The summer was a wild and incredible dope orgy here, but when winter came the crest of that wave broke and drifted on the shoals of local problems such as jobs, housing and deep snow on the roads to shacks that, a few months earlier, had been easily accessible. Many of the West Coast refugees moved on, but several hundred stayed; they hired on as carpenters, waiters, bartenders, dish-washers . . . and a year later they were part of the permanent population. By mid-'69 they occupied most of Aspen's so-called "low-cost housing"—first the tiny mid-town apartments, then out-lying shacks, and finally the trailer courts.

So most of the freaks felt that voting wasn't worth the kind of bullshit that went with it, and the mayor's illegal threats only reinforced their notion that politics in America was something to be avoided. Getting busted for grass was one thing, because the "crime" was worth the risk . . . but they saw no sense in going to court for a "political technicality," even if they weren't guilty.

(This sense of "reality" is a hallmark of the Drug Culture, which values the Instant Reward—a pleasant four-hour high—over anything involving a time-lag between the Effort and the End. On this scale of values, politics is too difficult, too "complex" and too "abstract" to justify any risk or initial action. It is the flip side of the "Good German" syndrome.)

The idea of asking young heads to "go clean" never occurred to us. They could go dirty, or even naked, for all we cared . . . all we asked them to do was first *register* and then *vote*. A year earlier these same people had seen no difference between Nixon and Humphrey. They were against the war in Vietnam, but the McCarthy crusade had never reached them. At the grass-roots of the Dropout-Culture, the idea of going Clean for Gene was a bad joke. Both Dick Gregory and George Wallace drew unnaturally large chunks of the vote in Aspen. Robert Kennedy would probably have carried the town, if he hadn't been killed, but he wouldn't have won by much. The town is essentially Republican: GOP registrations outnumber Democrats by more than two to one . . . but the combined total of both major parties just about equals the number of registered Independents, most of whom pride themselves being totally unpredictable. They are a jangled mix of Left/Crazies and Rightchers; cheap bigots, dope dealers, nazi ski instructors and spaced off "psychedelic farmers" with no politics at all beyond self-preservation.

* * *

At the end of that frenzied ten-day hustle (since we kept no count, no lists or records) we had no way of knowing how many half-stirred dropouts had actually registered, or how many of those would vote. So it was a bit of a shock all around when, toward the end of that election day, our poll-watchers' tallies showed that Joe Edwards had already cashed more than 300 of the 486 *new* registrations that had just gone into the books.

The race was going to be very close. The voting lists showed roughly 100 pro-Edwards voters who hadn't showed up at the polls, and we figured that 100 phone calls might raise at least 25 of these laggards. At that point it looked like 25 might make the nut, particularly in a sharply-divided three-way mayor's race in a town with only 1623 registered voters.

So we needed those phones. But where? Nobody knew . . . until a girl who'd been working on the phone network suddenly came up with a key to a spacious two-room office in the old Elks Club building. She had once worked there, for a local businessman and ex-hipster named Craig, who had gone to Chicago on business.

We seized Craig's office at once, ignoring the howls and curses of the mob in the Elks bar — where the out-going mayor's troops were already gathering to celebrate the victory of his hand-picked successor. (Legally, there was nothing they could do to keep us out of the place, although later that night they voted to have Craig evicted . . . and he is now running for the State Legislature on a Crush the Elks platform.) By six o'clock we had the new headquarters working nicely. The phone calls were extremely brief and direct: "Get off your ass, you bastard! We *need* you! Get out and vote!"

About six people worked the lists and the phones. Others went off to hustle the various shacks, lodges, hovels and communes where we knew there were voters but no phones. The place filled up rapidly, as the word went out that we finally had a headquarters. Soon the whole second-floor of the Elks Club was full of bearded freaks yelling frantically at each other; strange-looking people rushing up and down the stairs with lists, notebooks, radios, and cases of Budweiser . . .

Somebody stuck a purple spansule in my hand, saying, "Goddamn, you look tired! What you need is a hit of this excellent mescaline." I nodded absently and stuck the thing in one of the 22 pockets in my red campaign parka. Save this drug for later, I thought. No point getting crazy until the polls close . . . keep checking these stinking lists, squeeze every last vote out of them . . . keep calling, pushing, shouting at the bastards, threaten them . . .

There was something weird in the room, some kind of electric madness that I'd never noticed before. I stood against a wall with a beer in my hand and watched the machinery working. And after a while I realized what the difference was. For the first time in the campaign, these people really believed we were going to win — or at least that we had a good chance. And now, with less than an hour to go, they were working like a gang of coal-miners sent down to rescue the survivors of a cave-in. At that point — with my own role ended — I was probably the most pessimistic person in the room; the others seemed entirely convinced that Joe Edwards would be the next Mayor of Aspen . . . that our wild-eyed experiment with Freak Power was about to carry the day and establish a nationwide precendent.

* * *

We were in for a very long night—waiting for the ballots to be counted by hand—but even before the polls closed we knew we had changed the whole structure of Aspen's politics. The Old Guard was doomed, the liberals were terrorized and the Underground had emerged, with terrible suddenness, on a very serious power trip. Throughout the campaign I'd been promising, on the streets and in the bars, that if Edwards won this Mayor's race I would run for Sheriff next year (November, 1970)

. . . but it never occurred to me that I would actually have to run; no more than I'd ever seriously believed we could mount a "takeover bid" in Aspen.

But now it was happening. Even Edwards, a skeptic from the start, had said on election eve that he thought we were going to "win big." When he said it we were in his office, sorting out xerox copies of the Colorado election laws for our poll-watching teams, and I recall being stunned at his optimism.

"Never in hell," I said. "If we win at all it's going to be damn close — like 25 votes." But his comment had jangled me badly. God damn! I thought. Maybe we *will* win . . . and what then?

* * *

Finally, at around 6:30, I felt so useless and self-conscious just hanging around the action that I said what the hell, and left. I felt like Dagwood Bumstead pacing back and forth in some comic-strip version of a maternity-ward waiting room. Fuck this, I thought. I'd been awake and moving around like a cannonball for the last 50 hours, and now — with nothing else to confront — I felt the adrenalin sinking. Go home, I thought, eat this mescaline and put on the earphones, get away from this public agony. . . .

At the bottom of the long wooden stairway from Craig's office to the street I paused for a quick look into the Elks Club bar. It was crowded and loud and happy . . . a bar full of winners, like always. They had never backed a loser. They were the backbone of Aspen: shop-owners, cowboys, firemen, cops, construction workers . . . and their leader was the most popular mayor in the town's history, a two-term winner now backing his own hand-picked successor, a half-bright young lawyer. I flashed the Elks a big smile and a quick V-fingered "victory" sign. Nobody smiled . . . but it was hard to know if they realized that their man was already croaked; in a sudden three-way race he had bombed early, when the local Contractors' Association and all their real estate allies had made the painful decision to abandon Oates, their natural gut-choice, and devote all their weight and leverage to stopping the "hippie candidate," Joe Edwards. By the weekend before election day it was no longer a three-way campaign . . . and by Monday the only *question left* was how many mean-spirited, Right-bent shitheads could be mustered to vote *against* Joe Edwards.

The other alternative was a 55-year-old lady shopkeeper backed by author Leon Uris and the local Republican majority . . . Eve Homeyer, a longtime functionary in the Colorado GOP, had spent thousands of dollars on a super-chinzy campaign to re-create herself in the boneless image of Mamie Eisenhower. She hated stray dogs and motorcycles made her ears ring. Progress was nice and Development was good for the local economy. Aspen should be made safe for the annual big-spending visits of the Atlanta Ski Club and the Texas Cavaliers — which meant building a four-lane highway through the middle of town and more blockhouse condominiums to humor more tourists.

She played Nixon to Oates' Agnew. If the sight of naked hippies made her sick, she wasn't quite ready to cut their heads off. She was old and cranky, but not quite as mean as Oates' vigilante backers who wanted a mayor who would give them free rein to go out and beat the living shit out of anybody who didn't look like natural material for the Elks' and Eagles' membership drives. And where Oates wanted to turn Aspen into a Rocky Mountain version of Atlantic City . . . Eve Homeyer only wanted to make it a sort of St. Petersburg with a Disneyland overlay. She agreed *halfway*, with everything Lennie Oates stood for . . . but she wanted it made damn clear that she viewed Joe Edwards' candidacy as pure demented lunacy — a form of surly madness so wrong and rotten that only the Wretched and the Scum of the Earth could give it a moment's thought.

We had already beaten Oates, but I was too tired to hassle the Elks right then, and in some strange way I felt sorry for them. They were about to be stomped very badly by a candidate who agreed with them more than they knew. The people who had reason to fear the Edwards campaign were the sub-dividers, ski-pimps and city-based land-developers who had come like a plague of poison roaches to buy and sell the whole valley out from under the people who still valued it as a good place to live, not just a good investment.

Our program, basically, was to drive the real estate goons completely out of the valley: to prevent the State Highway Department from bringing a four-lane highway into the town and in fact *to ban all auto traffic from every downtown street*. Turn them all into grassy malls where everybody, even freaks, could do whatever's right. The cops would become trash collectors and maintenance men for a fleet of municipal bicycles, for anybody to use. No more huge, space-killing apartment buildings to block the view, from any downtown

Jacqueline Noyes

*Eve Homeyer: Mamie Eisenhower playing Nixon to Cates' Agnew*

street, of anybody who might want to look up and see the mountains. No more land-rapes, no more busts for "flute-playing" or "blocking the sidewalk" . . . fuck the tourists, dead-end the highway, zone the greedheads out of existence, and in general create a town where people could live like human beings, instead of slaves to some bogus sense of Progress that is driving us all mad.

Joe Edwards' platform was against the developers, not the old-timers and ranchers — and it was hard to see, from their arguments, how they could disagree in substance with anything we said . . . unless what they were really worried about was the very good chance that a win by Edwards would put an end to their options of selling out to the highest bidder. With Edwards, they said, would come horrors like Zoning and Ecology, which would cramp their fine Western style, the buy low, sell high ethic . . . free enterprise, as it were, and the few people who bothered to argue with them soon found that their nostalgic talk about "the good old days" and "the tradition of this peaceful valley" was only an awkward cover for their fears about "socialist-thinking newcomers."

Whatever else the Edwards campaign may or may not have accomplished, we had croaked that stupid sentimental garbage about the "land-loving old-timers."

I left the Elks Club building and stopped on Ayman St. for a moment to look up at the tall hills around the town. There was already snow on Smuggler, to the north . . . and on Bell, behind Little Nell, the ski trails were dim white tracks . . . steep toll-roads, waiting for Christmas and the blizzard of fat-wallet skiers who keep Aspen rich: Eight dollars a day to ski on those hills, $150 for a pair of good skis, $120 for the Right boots, $65 for a Meggi sweater, $75 for a goose-down parka . . . and $200 more for poles, gloves, goggles, hat, socks, and another $70 for a pair of ski pants. . . .

Indeed. The ski industry is big business. And "apres-ski" is bigger: $90 a day for an apartment in the Aspen Alps, $25 apiece for a good meal & wine in the Paragon . . . and don't forget the Bates Floaters (official apres-ski boot of the US Olympic team—the worst kind of flimsy shit imaginable for $30 a pair.)

It adds up to something like an average figure of $500 a week for the typical midwest dingbat who buys both his gear and his style out of Playboy. Then you multiply $100 a day by the many skier days logged in 1969-70 by the Aspen Ski Corp, and what you get is a staggering winter gross for a Rocky Mountain village with a real population of just over 2000.

Which is only half the story: The other half is an annual 30-35 percent growth/profit jump on all money fronts . . . and what you see here (or *saw*, prior to Nixon's economic adjustments) is/was a king-hell gold-mine with no end in sight. For the past ten years Aspen has been the showpiece/money-hub of a gold rush that has made millionaires. In the wake of World War II, they flocked in from Austria and Switzerland (never from Germany, they said) to staff the embryo nerve/resort centers of a sport that would soon be bigger than golf or bowling . . . and now, with skiing firmly established in America, the original German hustlers are wealthy burghers. They own restaurants, hotels, ski shops and especially vast chunks of real estate in places like Aspen.

* * *

After a savage, fire-sucking campaign we lost by only six (6) votes, out of 1200. Actually we lost by one (1) vote, but five of our absentee ballots didn't get here in time — primarily because they were mailed (to places like Mexico and Nepal and Guatemala) five days before the election.

We came very close to winning control of the town, and that was the crucial difference between our action in Aspen and, say, Norman Mailer's campaign in New York—which was clearly doomed from the start. At the time of Edwards' campaign we were not conscious of any precedent . . . and even now, in calm retrospect, the only similar effort that comes to mind is Bob Scheer's 1966 run for US Congress seat in Berkeley/Oakland—when he challenged liberal Jeffrey Cohelan and lost by something like two per cent of the vote. Other than that, most radical attempts to get into electoral politice have been colorful, fore-doomed efforts in the style of the Mailer-Breslin gig.

This same essential difference is already evident in 1970, with the sudden rash of assaults on various sheriff's fiefs. Stew Albert got 65,000 votes in Berkeley, running on a neo-hippie platform, but there was never any question of his winning. Another notable exception was David Pierce, a 30-year-old lawyer who was actually elected mayor of Richmond, California (pop. 100,000 plus) in 1964. Pierce mustered a huge black ghetto vote —mainly on the basis of his lifestyle and his promise to "bust Standard Oil." He served, and in fact ran, the city for three years—but in 1967 he suddenly abandoned everything to move to a monastery in Nepal. He is now in Turkey, en route to Aspen and then California, where he plans to run for Governor.

Another was Oscar Acosta, a Brown Power candidate for Sheriff of Los Angeles County, who pulled 110,000 votes out of something like two million.

Meanwhile in Lawrence, Kansas, George Kimball (defense minister for the local White Panther party) has already won the Democratic primary—running unopposed—but he expects to lose the general election by at least ten to one.

On the strength of the Edwards showing, I had decided to surpass my pledge and run for sheriff, and when both Kimball and Acosta visited Aspen recently, they were amazed to find that I actually expect to *win* my race. A preliminary canvass shows me running well ahead of the Democratic incumbent, and only slightly behind the Republican challenger.

The root point is that Aspen's political situation is so volatile—as a result of the Joe Edwards campaign — that *any* Freak Power candidate is now a possible winner.

In my case, for instance, I will have to work very hard—and spew out some really heinous ideas during my campaign—to get *less* than 30% of the vote in a three-way race. And an underground candidate who really wanted to win could assume, from the start, a working nut of about 40 percent of the electorate—with his chances of victory riding almost entirely on his Backlash Potential; or how much active fear and loathing his candidacy might provoke among the burghers who have controlled local candidates for so long.

The possibility of victory can be a heavy millstone around the neck of any political candidate who might prefer, in his heart, to spend his main energies on a series of terrifying, whiplash assaults on everything the voters hold dear. There are harsh echoes of the Magic Christian in this technique: The candidate first creates an impossible psychic maze, then he drags the voters into it and flails them constantly with gibberish and rude shocks. This was Mailer's technique, and it got him 55,000 votes in a city of 10 million people—but in truth it is more a form of vengeance than electoral politics. Which is not to say that it can't be effective, in Aspen or anywhere else, but as a political strategy it is tainted by a series of disastrous defeats.

In any event, the Magic Christian concent is one side of the "new politics" coin. It doesn't work, but it's fun . . . unlike that coin's other face that emerged in the presidential campaign of Gene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy in 1968. In both cases, we saw establishment candidates *claiming conversion* to some newer and younger state of mind (or political reality) that would make them more in tune with a newer, younger and weirder electorate that had previously called them both useless.

And it worked. Both conversions were hugely successful, for a while . . . . and if the tactic itself seemed cynical, it is still hard to know, in either case, whether the tactic was father to the conversion, or vice-versa. Which hardly matters, for now. We are talking about political-action formats: if the Magic Christian concept is one, then the Kennedy / McCarthy format has to qualify as another . . . . particularly as the national Democratic Party is already working desperately to make it work again in 1972, when the Demos' only hope of unseating Nixon will again be some shrewd establishment candidate on the brink of menopause who will suddenly start dropping acid in late '71 and then hit the rock-festival trail in the summer of '72. He will doff his shirt at every opportunity and his wife will burn her bra . . . . and millions of the young will vote for him, against Nixon.

Or will they? There is still another format, and this is the one we stumbled on in Aspen. Why not challenge the establishment with a candidate they've never heard of? Who has never been primed or prepped or greased for public office? And whose lifestyle is already so weird that the idea of "conversion" would never occur to him?

In other words, why not run an honest freak and turn him loose, on *their* turf, to show up all the "normal" candidates for the worthless losers they are and always have been? Why defer to the bastards? Why assume they're intelligent? Why believe they won't crack and fold in a crunch? (When the Japs went into Olympic volleyball they ran a blitz on everybody using strange but maddeningly legal

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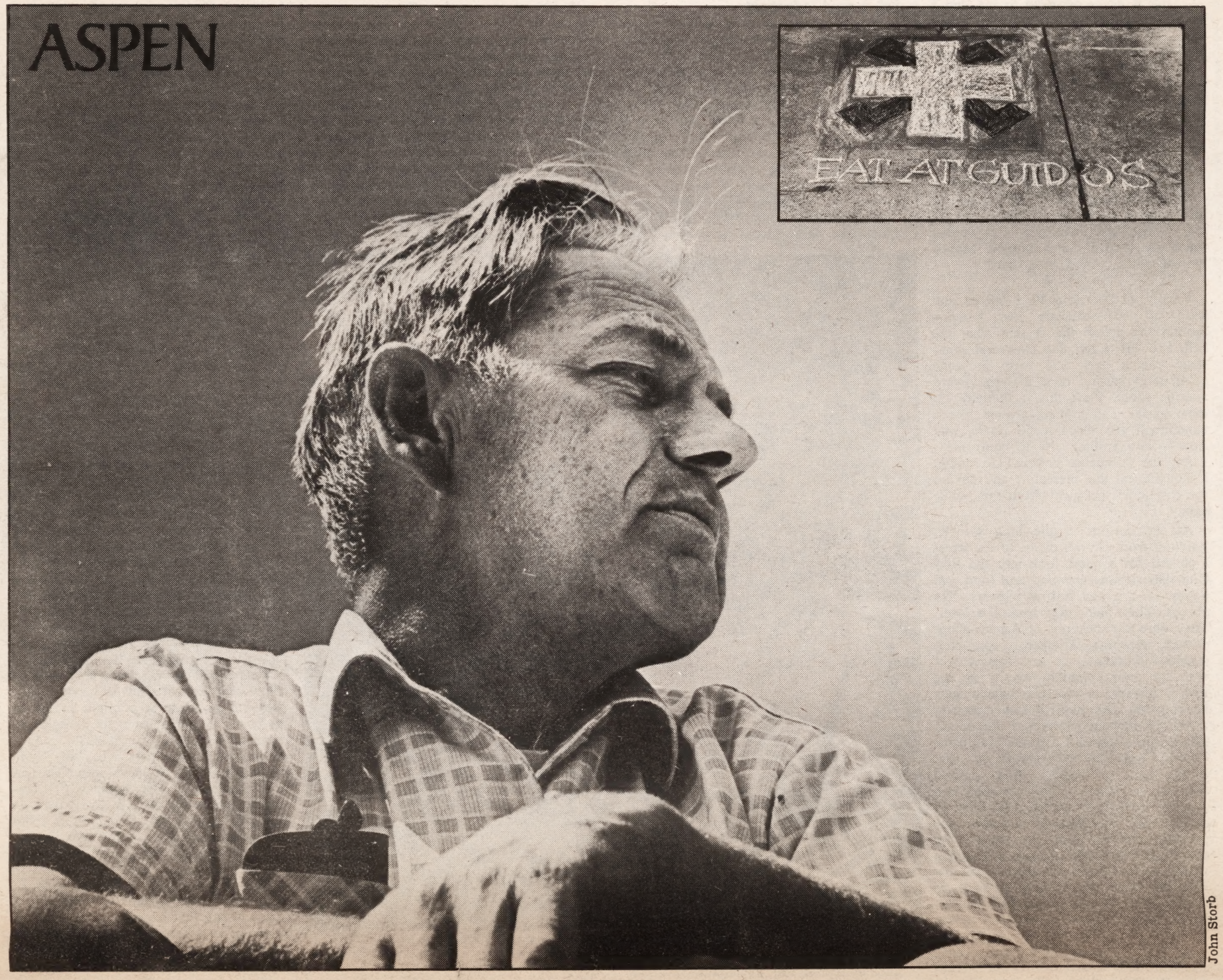


John Storb

—*Continued from Preceding Page*
techniques like the "Jap roll," the "dink spike" and the "lightning belly pass" that reduced their taller opponents to screaming jelly.)

This is the essence of what same people call "the Aspen technique" in politics: neither opting out of the system, nor working within it .... but calling its bluff, by using its strength to turn it back on itself .... and by always assuming that the people in power are not smart. By the end of the Edwards campaign, I was convinced, despite my lifelong bias to the contrary, that the Law was actually on our side. Not the cops, or the judges or the politicians—but the actual Law, itself, as printed in the dull and musty lawbooks that we constantly had to consult because we had no other choice.

* * *

But in November of '69 we had no time for this kind of theory-talk or thinking. I remember a list of books I wanted to get and read, in order to learn something about politics, but I barely had time to sleep, much less to do any reading. As the de facto campaign manager, I felt like a man who had started some kind of bloody gang-fight by accident .... and as the Edwards campaign grew crazier and more vicious, my only real concern was to save my own ass by warding off a disaster. I didn't know Edwards at all, but by mid-October I felt personally responsible for his future —and his prospects, at that point, were not good. Bill Dunaway, the "liberal" publisher of the Aspen Times, told me on the morning of election that I had "singlehandedly destroyed Joe Edwards' legal career in Aspen" by "forcing him into politics."

This was the liberal myth—that some drug-addled egomanic writer from Woody Creek had run amok on horse-tranquilizers, and then laid his bad trip on the local Head population .... who were normally quite peaceful and harmless, as long as they had enough drugs. But now, for some goddam reason, they had gone completely wild—and they were dragging poor Edwards down with them.

Right . . . poor Edwards: He was recently divorced and living with his girlfriend in a local garret, half-starving for income in a town full of lame dilettante lawyers, and his name was completely unknown except as "that bastard who sued the city" a year earlier, on behalf of two longhairs who claimed the cops were discriminating against them. Which was true, and the lawsuit had a terrible effect on the local police. The Chief (now a candidate for sheriff) had quit or been fired in a rage, leaving his patrolmen on probation to a federal judge in Denver—who put the suit in limbo, while warning the Aspen cops that he would bust the city severely at the first sign of "discriminatory law enforcement" against hippies.

This lawsuit had severe repercussions in Aspen: The mayor was shackled, the City Council lost its will to live, the City Magistrate, Guido Meyer, was fired instantly—even before the Police Chief—and the local cops suddenly stopped busting longhairs for things like "blocking the sidewalk," which carried a 90-day jail sentence that summer, along with a $200 fine.

That bullshit stopped at once, and it has stayed stopped—thanks entirely to Edwards' lawsuit; the local liberals called an ACLU meeting, and let it go at that. So only a waterhead could have been surprised when, a year later, a handful of us in search of a mayor candidate decided to call on Joe Edwards. Why not? It made perfect sense—except to the liberals, who were not quite comfortable with a Freak Power candidate. They didn't mind Edwards, they said, and they even agreed with his platform—which we had carefully carved to their tastes—but there was something very ominous, they felt, about the "rabble" support he was getting: Not the kind of people one really wanted to sip vichysoisse with—wild heads, bikers and anarchists who didn't know Stevenson and hated Hubert Humphrey. Who were these people? What did they want?

What indeed? The local businessmen's bund was not puzzled. Joe Edwards, to them, was the leader of a Communist drug plot to destroy their way of life, sell LSD to their children and Spanish Fly to their wives. Never mind that many of their children were already selling LSD to each other, and that most of their wives couldn't get humped on a bad night in Juarez .... that was all beside the point. The *point* was that a gang of freaks was about to take over the town.

And why not? We had never denied it. Not even in the platform—which was public, and quite mild. But somewhere around the middle of the Edwards' campaign even the liberals got a whiff of what his platform really meant. They could see a storm gathering behind it, that our carefully reasoned words were only on opening wedge for dractic action. They knew, from long experience, that a word like "ecology" can mean almost anything—and to most of them it meant spending one day a year with a neighborhood clean-up crew, picking up beer cans and sending them back to Coors for a refund that would be sent, of course, to their favorite charity.

But "ecology," to us, meant something else entirely: We had in mind a deluge of brutally restrictive actions that would permanently cripple not only the obvious landrapers but also that quiet cabal of tweedy/liberal speculators who insist on dealing in private, so as not to foul the image .... Like Armand Bartos, the New York "art patron" and jet-set fashion-pacer often hummed in Women's Wear Daily .... who is also the owner/builder and oft-cursed landlord of Aspen's biggest and ugliest trailer court. The place is called "Gerbazdale," and some of the tenants insist that Bartos raises their rents every time he decides to buy another Pop Art Original.

"I'm tired of financing that asshole's art collection," said one. "He's one of the most blatant goddam slumlords in the Western World. He milks us out here, then gives our rent money to shitheads like Warhol."

Bartos is in the same league with Wilton "Wink" Jaffee Jr. — a New York stockbroker recently suspended for unethical manipulation of the market. Jaffee has taken great pains to cultivate his image, in Aspen, as that of an arty-proggressive Eastern aesthete. But when the SEC zapped him, he responded by quickly leasing a chunk of his vast ranch—between Aspen and Woods Creek—to a high-powered gravel-crushing operation from Grand Junction, which immediately began grinding up the earth and selling it, by the ton, to the State Highway Department. And now, after destroying the earth and fouling the Roaring Fork River, the swine are demanding a zoning variance so they can build an asphalt plant .... on the elegant Aspen estate that Wink Jaffee no doubt describes quite often to his progressive friends on Wall Street.

These, and others like them, are the kind of shysters and horsey hypocrites who pass for "liberals" in Aspen. So we were not surprised when many of them made a point of withdrawing their support about halfway through Edwards' campaign. At first they had liked our words and our fiery underdog stance (fighting the good fight in another hopeless cause, etc.), but when Edwards began looking like a winner, our liberal allies panicked.

* * *

By noon on election day, the only real question was How Many Liberals had Hung On. A few had come over, as it were, but those few were not enough to form the other half of the nervous power base we had counted on from the start. The original idea had been to lash together a one-shot coalition and demoralize the local money/politics establishment by winning a major election before the enemy knew what was happening. Aspen's liberals are a permanent minority who have never won *anything*, despite their constant struggles .... and Aspen's fabled "underground" is a far larger minority that has never even *tried* to win anything.

So *power* was our first priority. The platform—or at least our public version of it—was too intentionally vague to be anything but a flexible, secondary tool for wooing the liberals and holding our coalition. On the other hand, not even the handful of people in the powernexus of Joe Edwards' campaign could guarantee that he would start sodding the streets and flaying the sheriff just as soon as he got elected. He was, after all, a lawyer — an evil trade, at best — and I think we all knew, although nobody ever said it, that we really had no idea what the bastard might do if he got elected.

Bob Krueger

*Meat Possum A.C. members Ned Vare, candidate; Mike Solheim, campaign coordinator; and Bruce LeFavour, restaurateur & future candidate*

For all we knew he could turn into a vicious monster and have us all jailed for sedition.

None of us even *knew* Joe Edwards. For weeks we had joked about our "ghost candidate" who emerged from time to time to insist that he was the helpless creature of some mysterious Political Machine that had caused his phone to ring one Saturday at midnight, and told him he was running for Mayor.

Which was more or less true. I had called him in a frenzy, full of booze and resentment at a rumor that a gaggle of local powermongers had already met and decided who Aspen's next mayor would be—a giddy old lady would run unopposed behind some kind of lunatic obscenity they called a "united front," or "progressive solidarity" — endorsed by Leon Uris, who is Aspen's leading stag movie fan, and who writes books, like *Exodus,* to pay his bills. I was sitting in Peggy Clifford's living room when I heard about it, and, as I recall, we both agreed that the fuckers had gone too far this time.

Someone suggested Ross Griffin, a retired ski-bum and lifelong mountain beatnik who was going half-straight at the time and talking about running for the City Council . . . . but a dozen or so trial-balloon calls convinced us that Ross wasn't quite weird enough to galvanize the street vote, which we felt would be absolutely necessary. (As it turned out, we were wrong: Griffin ran for the Council and won by a huge margin in a ward full of Heads.)

But at the time it seemed necessary to come up with a candidate whose Strange Tastes and Para-Legal Behavior were absolutely beyond question . . . a man whose candidacy would torture the outer limits of political gall, whose name would strike fear and shock in the heart of every burgher, and whose massive unsuitability for the job would cause even the most a political drug-child in the town's most degenerate commune to shout, "Yes! I must *vote* for that man!"

Joe Edwards didn't quite fill that bill. He was a bit too straight for the acid-people, and a little too strange for the liberals—but he was the only candidate even marginally acceptable on both ends of our un-tried coalition spectrum. And 24 hours after our first jangled phone talk about "running for Mayor" he said "Fuck it, why not?"

The next day was Sunday and *The Battle of Algiers* was playing at the Wheeler Opera House. We agreed to meet afterwards, on the street, but the hookup was difficult, because I didn't know what he looked like. So we ended up milling around for a while, casting sidelong glances at each other, and I remember thinking, Jesus, could that be *him* over there? That scurvy-looking geek with the shifty eyes? Shit, he'll never win anything. . . . .

Finally after awkward introductions, we walked down to the old Jerome Hotel and ordered some beers sent out to the lobby, where we could talk privately. Our campaign juggernaut, that night, consisted of me, Jim Salter and Mike Solheim—but we all assured Edwards that we were only the tip of the iceberg that was going to float him straight into the sea-lanes of big-time power politics. In fact, I sensed that both Solheim and Salter were embarrassed to find themselves there — assuring some total stranger that all he had to do was say the word and we would make him Mayor of Aspen.

None of us had even a beginner's knowledge of how to run a political campaign. Salter writes screen-plays *(Downhill Racer)* and books *(A Sport and a Pastime).* Solheim used to own an elegant bar called Leadville, in Ketchum, Idaho, and his Aspen gig is housepainting. For my part, I had lived about ten miles out of town for two years, doing everything possible to avoid Aspen's feverish reality. My lifestyle, I felt, was not entirely suited for doing battle with any small-town political establishment. They had left me alone, not hassled my friends (with two unavoidable exceptions — both lawyers), and consistently ignored all rumors of madness and violence in my area. In return, I had consciously avoided writing about Aspen . . . . and in my very limited congress with the local authorities I was treated like some kind of half-mad cross between a hermit and a wolverine, a thing best left alone as long as possible.

So the '69 campaign was perhaps a longer step for me than it was for Joe Edwards. He had already tasted political conflict and he seemed to dig it. But my own involvement amounted to the willful shattering of what had been, until then, a very comfortable truce . . . and looking back I'm still not sure what launched me. Probably it was Chicago—that brain-raping week in August of '68. I went to the Democratic Convention as a journalist, and returned a raving beast.

For me, that week in Chicago was far worse than the worst bad acid trip I'd even heard rumors about. It permanently altered my brain chemistry, and my first new idea—when I finally calmed down—was an absolute conviction there was no possibility for any personal truce, for me, in a nation that could hatch and be proud of a malignant monster like Chicago. Suddenly, it seemed imperative to get a grip on those who had somehow slipped into power and caused the thing to happen.

But who were they? Was Mayor Daley a cause, or a symptom? Lyndon Johnson was finished, Hubert Humphrey was doomed, McCarthy was broken, Kennedy was dead, and that left only Nixon, that pompous, plastic little fart who would soon be our President. I went to Washington for his Inauguration, hoping for a terrible shitrain that would pound the White House to splinters. But it didn't happen; no shitrain, no justice . . . and Nixon was finally in charge.

So in truth it was probably a sense of impending doom, of horror at politics in general, that goaded me into my role in the Edwards' campaign. The reasons came later, and even now they seem hazy. Some people call politics fun, and maybe it is when you're winning. But even then it's a mean kind of fun, and more like the rising edge of a speed trip than anything peaceful or pleasant. Real happiness, in politics, is a wide-open hammer shot on some poor bastard who knows he's been trapped, but can't flee.

The Edwards campaign was more an uprising than a movement. We had nothing to lose: we were like a bunch of wild-eyed amateur mechanics rolling a homemade racing car onto the track at Indianapolis and watching it overtake a brace of big Offenhausers at the 450 pole. There were two distinct phases in the month-long Edwards campaign. For the first two weeks we made a lot of radical noise and embarrassed our friends and discovered that most of the people we had counted on were absolutely useless.

So nobody was ready for the second phase, when the thing began coming together like a conquered jigsaw puzzle. Our evening strategy meetings in the Jerome Bar were suddenly crowded with people demanding a piece of the action. We were inundated with $5 and $10 contributions from people whom none of us knew. From Bob Krueger's tiny darkroom and Bill Noonan's angry efforts to collect enough money to pay for a full-page ad in Dunaway's liberal Times, we suddenly inherited all the facilities of the "Center of the Eye" Photography School and an unlimited credit-line (after Dunaway fled to the Bahamas) from Steve Herron at the Times-owned radio station, then the only one in town. (Several months after the election a 24-hour FM station began broadcasting—with daytime muzak balanced off against a late-night freak-rock gig as heavy as anything in S.F. or L.A.) With no local television, the radio was our equivalent of a high-powered TV campaign. And it provoked the same kind of surly reaction that has been shrugged off, on both coasts, by US Senate candidates such as Ottinger (N.Y.) and Tunney (Calif.).

That comparison is purely technical. The radio spots we ran in Aspen would have terrified political eunuchs like Tunney and Ottinger. Our theme song was Herbie Mann's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which we ran over and over again—as a doleful background to very heavy raps and evil mockery of the retrograde opposition. They bitched and groaned, accusing us in their ignorance of "using Madison Avenue techniques," while in truth it was pure Lenny Bruce. But they didn't know Lenny; their humor was still Bob Hope, with a tangent taste for Don Rickles here and there among the handful of swingers who didn't mind admitting that they dug the stag movies, on weekends, at Leon Uris' home on Red Mountain.

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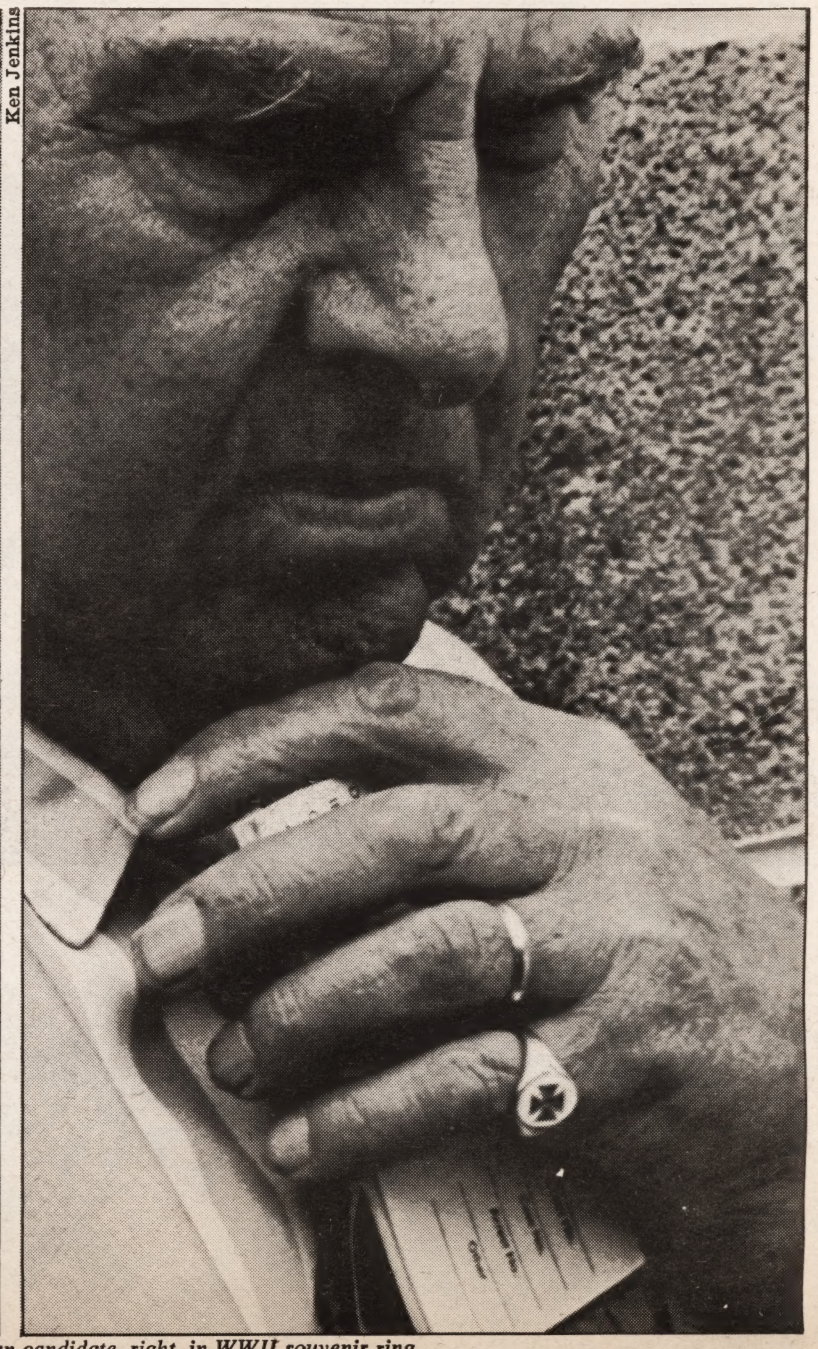
Bob Krueger

Ken Jenkins



*Democratic candidate for sheriff, left, in white shirt: republican candidate, right, in WWII souvenir ring*

*—Continued from Preceding Page*

We enjoyed skewering those bastards. Our radio wizard, an ex-nightclub comic, Phil Clark, made several spots that caused people to foam at the mouth and chase their tails in impotent rage. There was a thread of high, wild humor in the Edwards campaign, and that was what kept us all sane. There was a definite satisfaction in knowing that, even if we lost, whoever beat us would never get rid of the scars. It was necessary, we felt, to thoroughly terrify our opponents, so that even in hollow victory, they would learn to fear every sunrise until the next election.

* * *

This worked out nicely—or at least effectively, and by the spring of 1970 it was clear on all fronts, that Aspen's traditional power structure was no longer in command of the town. The new City Council quickly broke down to a permanent 3-4 split, with Ned Vare as the spokesman for one side and a Bircher-style dentist named Comcowich taking care of the other. This left Eve Homeyer, who had campaigned with the idea that the mayor was "only a figurehead," in the nasty position of having to cast a tie-breaking vote on every controversial issue. The first few were minor, and she voted her Agnew-style convictions in each case . . . but the public reaction was ugly, and after a while the Council lapsed into a kind of nervous stalemate, with neither side anxious to bring *anything* to a vote. The realities of a small-town politics are so close to the bone that there is no way to avoid getting cursed in the streets, by somebody, for any vote you cast. An alderman in Chicago can insulate himself almost completely from the people he votes against, but there is no escape in a place the size of Aspen.

The same kind of tension began popping up on other fronts: The local high school principal tried to fire a young teacher for voicing a left-wing political bias in the classroom, but her students went on strike and not only forced the teacher's reinstatement but very nearly got the principal fired. Shortly after that, Ned Vare and a local lawyer named Shellman savaged the State Highway Department so badly that all plans to bring the four-lane highway through town were completely de-funded. This drove the County Commissioners into a filthy funk; the Highway had been their pet project, but suddenly it was screwed, doomed . . . by the same gang of bastards who had caused all the trouble last fall.

The Aspen Medical Center was filled with cries of rage and anguish. Comcowich the twisted dentist rushed out of his office in that building and punched a young freak off his bicycle, screeching: "You dirty little motherfucker we're going to run you all out of town!" Then he fled back inside, to his office across the hall from that of the good Dr. Barnard (Buggsy) and his like-minded cohort Dr. J. Sterling Baxter.

For five years these two had controlled Aspen's affairs with a swagger that mixed sports cars and speed with mistresses and teeny-boppers and a cavalier disdain for the amenities of the medical profession. Buggsy handled the municipal action, while Baxter ran the County, and for five fairly placid years the Aspen Medical Center was Aspen's Tammany Hall. Buggsy dug his Mayor's act immensely. From time to time he would run amok and abuse his power disgracefully, but in general he handled it well. His friends were many and varied—ranging from dope dealers and outlaw bikers to District Judges and horse-traders . . . even me, and in fact it never crossed my mind that Buggsy would be anything but a tremendous help when we kicked off the Edwards campaign. It seemed entirely logical that an *old* freak would want to pass the torch to a *young* freak . . .

Instead, he refused to go gracefully, and rather than helping Edwards he tried to destroy him. At one point Barnard actually tried to get back into the race himself, and when that didn't work he shoved in a last-minute dummy. This was poor Oates, who went down—along with Buggsy—to an ignominious defeat. We beat them stupid, and Barnard couldn't believe it. Shortly after the polls closed, he went down to City Hall and stared balefully at the blackboard when the clerk started posting the returns. The first figures stunned him visibly, they said, and by ten o'clock he was raving incoherently about "fraud" and "recounts" and "those dirty bastards, who turned on me."

One of his friends who was there recalls it as a very heavy scene . . . although Dylan Thomas might have dug it, for the Mayor is said to have raged horribly against the dying of the light.

And so much for w' might have been a very sad story . . . . except that Buggsy went home that night and began laying feverish plans to become Mayor of Aspen again. His new power base is a thing called the "Taxpayers' League," a sort of reverse-elite corps of the booziest Elks and Eagles, whose only real point of agreement is that every animal in this world that has walked on two legs for less than 50 years is evil, queer and dangerous. The Taxpayers' League is a really classic example of what anthropologists call on "atavistic endeavor." On the scale of political development, they are still flirting with Senator Bilbo's dangerously progressive proposal to send all the niggers back to Africa on a fleet of iron barges.

This is Buggsy's new constituency. They are not *all* vicious drunks, and not *all* mental defectives either. Some are genuinely confused and frightened at what seems to be the End of the World as they know it. And this is sad, too . . . . but the saddest thing of all is that, in the context of this article, the Taxpayers' League is not irrelevant. In the past six months this group has emerged as the most consistently effective voting bloc in the valley. They have beaten the liberals handily in every recent encounter (none crucial) that came down, in the end, to a matter of who had the muscle.

Who indeed? The liberals simply can't get it up . . . . and since the end of the Edwards campaign we have deliberately avoided any effort to mobilize the Freak Power bloc. The political attention span of the average dropout is too short, we felt, to blow it on anything minor. Nearly everyone who worked on the Edwards gig last year was convinced that he would have won easily if the election had been held on November 14th instead of November 4th . . . . or if we'd started whipping our act together even a week earlier.

Maybe so, but I doubt it. That idea assumes that we had *control* of the thing—but we didn't. The campaign was out of control from beginning to end and the fact that it peaked on election day was a perfect accident, a piece of luck that we couldn't have planned. By the time the polls opened we had fired just about every shot we had. There was nothing left to do, on election day, except deal with Buggsy's threats—and that was done before noon. Beyond that, I don't recall that we did much—until just before the polls closed—except drive around town at high speed and drink vast amounts of beer.

There is no point even hoping for that kind of luck again this year. We began organizing in mid-August — six weeks earlier than last time—and unless we can pace the thing perfectly we we might find ourselves limp and burned out two weeks before the election. I have a nightmare vision of our whole act coming to a massive orgiastic climax on October 25th: Two thousand costumed freaks doing the schottische, in perfect unison, in front of the County Courthouse . . . . sweating, weeping, chanting . . . . "Vote NOW! Vote NOW." Demanding the ballot *at once*, completely stoned on politics, too high and strung out to even recognize their candidate, Ned Vare, when he appears on the courthouse steps and shouts for them all to back off: "Go back to your homes! You can't vote for ten more days!" The mob responds with a terrible roar, then surges forward . . . . Vare disappears . . . .

I turn to flee, but the sheriff is there with a huge rubber sack that he quickly flips over my head and places me under arrest for felony conspiracy. The elections are canceled and J. Sterling Baxter places the town under martial law, with himself in total command. . . .

Baxter is both the symbol and the reality of the Old/Ugly/Corrupt political machine that we hope to crack in November. He will be working from a formidable power base: A coalition of Buggy's "Taxpayers" and Comcowich's right-wing suburbanites — along with heavy institutional support from both banks, the Contractors' Association and the all-powerful Aspen Ski Corporation. He will also have the financing and organizing resources of the local GOP, which outnumbers the Democrats more than two to one in registrations.

The Democrats, with an eye on the probability of another Edwards-style uprising on the Left, are running a political transvestite, a middle-aged realtor whom they will try to promote as a

Jacqueline Noyes

*Visit scenic Fat City*

"sensible alternative" to the menacing "extremes" posed by Baxter and Ned Vare. *The incumbent Sheriff is also a* Democrat.

Vare is running as an Independent and his campaign symbol, he says, will be "a tree." For the Sheriff's campaign, my symbol will be either a horribly-deformed cyclops owl, or a double-thumbed fist, clutching a peyote button, which is also the symbol of our general strategy and organizing cabal, the Meat Possum Athletic Club. At the moment I am registered as an Independent, but there is still the possibility—pending the outcome of current negotiations for campaign financin—that I may file for office as a Communist. It will make no difference which label I adopt; the die is already cast in my race—and the only remaining question is how many Freaks, heads, criminals, anarchists, beatniks, poachers, Wobblies, bikers and Persons of Weird Persuasion will come out of their holes and vote for me. The alternatives are depressingly obvious: my opponents are hopeless bums who would be more at home on the Mississippi State Highway Patrol . . . and, if elected, I promise to recommend them both for the kind of jobs they deserve.

Ned Vare's race is both more complex and far more important than mine. He is going after the dragon. Jay Baxter is the most powerful political figure in the county. He is *the* County Commissioner; the other two are echoes. If Vare can beat Baxter that will snap the spine of the local / money / politics establishment . . . and if Freak Power can do that in Aspen, it can also do it in other places. But if it *can't* be done here, one of the few places in America where we can work off a proven power base—then it is hard to imagine it working in any other place with fewer natural advantages. Last fall we came within six votes, and it will probably be close again this time. Memories of the Edwards campaign will guarantee a heavy turnout, with a dangerous blacklash factor that could wipe us out completely unless the Head population can get itself together and actually *vote*. Last year perhaps the Heads voted; this year we will need them all. The ramifications of this election go far beyond any local issues or candidates. It is an experiment with a totally new kind of political muscle . . . and the results, either way, will definitely be worth pondering.

## TENTATIVE PLATFORM

Thompson for Sheriff
Aspen, Colorado, 1970

1) Sod the streets at once. Rip up all city streets with jackhammers and use the junkasphalt (after melting) to create a huge parking and auto-storage lot on the outskirts of town—preferably somewhere out of sight, like between the new sewage plant and McBride's new shopping center. All refuse and other garbage could be centralized in this area—in memory of Mrs. Walter Paepke, who sold the land for development. The only automobiles allowed into town would be limited to a network of "delivery-alleys," as shown in the very detailed plan drawn by architect / planner Fritz Benedict in 1969. All public movement would be by foot and a fleet of bicycles, maintained by the city police force.

2) Change the name "Aspen," by public referendum, to "Fat City." This would prevent greedheads, land-rapers and other human jackals from capitalizing on the name "Aspen." Thus, Snowmass-at-Aspen —recently sold to Kaiser/Aetna of Oakland — would become "Snowmass-at-Fat City." Aspen Wildcat—whose main backers include The First National City Bank of New York and the First Boston Capital Corp.—would have to be called "Fat City Wildcat." All roadsigns and roadmaps would have to be changed from Aspen to "Fat City." The local Post Office and Chamber of Commerce would have to honor the new name. "Aspen," Colo. would no longer exist — and the psychic alterations of this change would be massive in the world of commerce: Fat City Ski Fashions, the Fat City Slalom Cup, Fat City Music Festival, Fat City Institute for Humanistic Studies . . . . etc. And the main advantage here is that changing the name of the town would have no major effect on the town itself, or on those people who came here because it's a good place to *live*. What effect the name-change might have on those who came here to buy low, sell high and then move on is fairly obvious . . . . and eminently desirable. These swine should be fucked, broken and driven across the land.

3) Drug Sales must be controlled. My first act as Sheriff will be to install, on the courthouse lawn, a bastinado platform and a set of stocks—in order to punish dishonest dope dealers in a proper public fashion. Each year these dealers cheat millions of people out of millions of dollars. As a breed, they rank with sub-dividers and used car salesmen and the Sheriff's Dept. will gladly hear complaints against dealers at any hour of the day or night, with immunity from prosecution guaranteed to the complaining party — provided the complaint is valid. (It should be noted, on this point in the platform, that any Sheriff of any County in Colorado is legally responsible for enforcing *all* State Laws regarding drugs—even those few he might personally disagree with. The statutes provide for malfeasance penalties up to $100 in each instance, in cases of willful non-enforcement . . . . but it should also be noted that the statutes provide for many other penalties, in many other strange and unlikely circumstances, and as Sheriff I shall make myself aware of *all* of them, without exception. So any vengeful, ill-advised dingbat who might presume to bring malfeasance charges against my office should be quite sure of his / her facts . . . ) And in the meantime, it will be the general philosophy of the Sheriff's office that *no* drug worth taking should be sold for money. Non-profit sales will be viewed as borderline cases, and judged on their merits. But *all* sales for money-profit will be punished severely. This approach, we feel, will establish a unique and very human *ambiance* in the Aspen (or Fat City) drug culture—which is already so much a part of our local reality that only a falangist lunatic would talk about trying to "eliminate it." The only realistic approach is to make life in this town very ugly for *all* profiteers — in drugs and all other fields.

4) Hunting and fishing should be forbidden to *all* non-residents, with the exception of those who can obtain the signed endorsement of a resident—who will then be legally responsible for any violation or abuse committed by the non-resident he has "signed for." Fines will be heavy and the general policy will be Merciless Prosecution of All Offenders. But—as in the case of the proposed city name-change—this "Local Endorsement" plan should have no effect on anyone except greedy, dangerous kill-freaks who are a menace wherever they go. This new plan would have no effect on residents—except those who chose to *endorse* visiting "sportsmen." By this approach—making hundreds or even thousands of individuals personally responsible for protecting the animals, fish and birds who live here—we would create a sort of de facto game preserve, without the harsh restrictions that will necessarily be forced on us if these blood-thirsty geeks keep swarming in here each autumn to shot everything they see.

5) The Sheriff and his Deputies should *never* be armed in public. Every urban riot, shoot-out and blood-bath (involving guns) in recent memory has been set off by some trigger-happy cop in a fear frenzy. And no cop in Aspen has had to use a gun for so many years that I feel safe in offering a $12 cash award to anybody who can recall such an incident in writing. (Box K-3, Aspen). Under normal circumstances a pistol-grip Macebomb, such as the MK-V made by Gen. Ordnance, is more than enough to quickly wilt any violence-problem that is likely to emerge in Aspen. And anything the MK-V can't handle would require reinforcements anyway . . . . in which case the response would be geared at all times to Massive Retaliation: a brutal attack with guns, bombs, pepper-foggers, wolverines and all other weapons deemed necessary to restore the civic peace. The whole notion of disarming the police is to *lower* the level of violence—while guaranteeing, at the same time, a terrible punishment to anyone stupid enough to attempt violence on an un-armed cop.

6) It will be the policy of the Sheriff's office savagely to harass all those engaged in any form of land-rape. This will be done by acting, with utmost dispatch, on any and all righteous complaints. My first act in office—after setting up the machinery for punishing dope-dealers—will be to establish a Research Bureau to provide facts on which any citizen can file a Writ of Seizure, a Writ of Stoppage, a Writ of Fear, of Horror . . . . yes . . . . even a Writ of Assumption . . . . against any greedhead who has managed to get around our antiquated laws and set up a tar-vat, scum-drain or gravel-pit. These writs will be pursued with overweening zeal . . . . and always within the letter of the law. Selah.